

# La Guancha FEMA Will Recover with Multi-million Dollar Allocation from FEMA

---

Release Date: September 1, 2021

*The municipality of Ponce has close to \$75.6 million in obligations as a result of Hurricane María*

**GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico** — An obligation of more than **\$6.7 million** from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was recently assigned for repairs at the Recreational and Cultural Center Enrique “Coco” Vicéns, known as La Guancha. With these funds, permanent repairs will be made to the facilities of this iconic complex in Ponce.

In addition to being a meeting place, La Guancha is key in the economy of this city known as the stately city (*Ciudad Señorial*). During regular operations, the businesses located there generated around \$6.2 million in revenue. After the repairs are finalized, business opportunities are expected to duplicate, and this amount is projected to increase to \$12 million, per municipal data.

According to Puerto Rico’s Federal Disaster Recovery Coordinator, José G. Baquero, emblematic places like La Guancha are also important in the recovery of Puerto Rico. “It is a source of great satisfaction that, through these funding allocations, we are able to help restore sites that promote entertainment, family involvement and tourism, which are vital to the island's recovery process. This is a holistic development that goes beyond the reconstruction of buildings; it is the recovery of our social, family and cultural environment.”, said Baquero.



For the Mayor of Ponce, Luis Irizarry Pabón, the Municipal Administration has the determination to accomplish what will lead to a boost to this damaged economy, including “all the viable alternatives that allow for that surge in commercial and tourist activity at La Guancha.” The mayor understands that this facility serves as a platform for creative, gastronomical and cultural businesses, and has such variety in creative alternatives that makes this “one of the most important tourist centers in the Caribbean. The La Guancha area is connected to Ponce’s vision of the future, that, with a port and an airport with potential for growth and expansion, represents a real opportunity for strength and change,” he said.

La Guancha sits on over 134,000 square meters, where concrete columns and panels, lighting poles and its renowned boardwalk will be replaced. Of the funds allocated, \$1.2 million is for future damage mitigation efforts and includes work to increase erosion and storm surge protection. In addition, a total of 155 direct and 42 indirect jobs are expected to be generated once it is in optimal condition.

For their part, Yanit Madera Laboy and her husband Edgar Rodríguez Plaza, owners of two kiosks in La Guancha, said they are hopeful that these federal funds will give the area a fresh start. They suffered major damage during hurricane María, including the roof and solar panels, among other damage, which later worsened with the earthquakes and the pandemic, causing them to shutter their operations for a year. At the moment, there are about 40 active business owners there.

In addition, the Southern Puerto Rico Chamber of Commerce stated through its president, Luis Alvarado Cintrón, the entity’s satisfaction and support for the adjudication of funds for the permanent work at La Guancha. “This recreational and cultural complex is iconic of our city and one of the most visited by thousands of people daily, being one the engines of economic development in our Southern Region through the Tourism program,” he said.

Similarly, Manuel A. Laboy Rivera, Executive Director of the Central Office for Recovery, Reconstruction and Resiliency (COR3), said that through these funds allocated by FEMA, a vital space is recovered for socioeconomic development that is of great interest for tourism in the southern part of Puerto Rico. “Currently, we have disbursed close to \$7.2 million for permanent work, which include roads, bridges, buildings, equipment, utilities, parks and recreational facilities, among other assets of the Municipality of Ponce. We reiterate our commitment to be facilitators in the execution process of the recovery projects led by the municipality of Ponce,” he concluded.

For more information about the recovery of Puerto Rico after hurricane María, visit [fema.gov/disaster/4339](https://fema.gov/disaster/4339)



and [recuperacion.pr](http://recuperacion.pr). Follow us on social media at [Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico](https://Facebook.com/FEMAPuertoRico), [Facebook.com/COR3pr](https://Facebook.com/COR3pr) and [Twitter @COR3pr](https://Twitter @COR3pr).



**FEMA**